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91-92
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Fioretti



Fioretti

A Literary Anthology

Volume 50, Number 2

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Marian College

Indianapolis, Indiana

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NOTE: This year marks the
Fioretti's golden anniversary.
We appreciate all the contribu-
tions we have received espe-
cially our cover design and the
"Adversarial" poem by former
students Marianne Mitchell and
her sister Joan Peternel. We
also welcome new submissions for
our next edition.

Special thanks to Larry and Joe
for their help.

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O SIMPLE SAINT

Still he kneels
patiently poised
bearing a cross
of heavy stone
like beliefs he kept
though not fast followed.

His father held
the doubt black doubt,
that order tried to
confine, shut out,
his sanity of madness.

His mother saw
she sympathized, yet
never understood just why
he gave his life
away to don a
robe waistbound with rope.

But rope he cast
as line of hope
into a sea of poor
that they should
drown no more
in sorrow class created.

Rose, sweet rose
its thorn did shed
by God's command
scar not the man
whose faith held fast
named Francis.



Like rose red
temptation shed,
outward cast
his social class,
riches borne unto him,
so to lead life simply.
Yet those who scorned
his life did mourn upon
his quiet passing,
the room he died in
placed inside a
richly colored church.
And now near roses
statue stands,
bird nest in hands,
for only nature
sweet nature
shall truly understand.

Noelle Gasco

THE MIRACLE OF LIFE

Pamela A. Webb

It must have been October seventh...no, it was October eighth. Yes, that was the day--the day my whole world fell apart.

The morning began normally enough. My sadistic alarm clock went off at 6:30 a.m. I, of course, hit the off button as I usually do and fell back into dreamland. Fifteen minutes later, my mother, who knew me too well, yelled up the stairs, "Beth, it's 6:45! You're going to be late!"

So out of bed I jumped and into the shower. The water felt like bullets on my body. I decided I needed to stop studying for French tests until 1:00 a.m.

After my shower, while getting dressed, I looked out my window to the spectacular panoramic view of the mountains. I loved living in Colorado, especially in the autumn and winter.

As I was putting on my black ankle length boots, I appraised my

image in the mirror. The long black sweater over red and black checkered stirrup pants looked pretty good, I decided. I then applied makeup and put my blown-dry hair in hot rollers. My cat Blackbird strolled into the room and jumped onto my unmade bed. Aptly named, Blackbird, with her blue-black fur and yellow eyes, made a stark contrast with my ivory bedspread and sheets. Although red and black were my favorite colors, I couldn't bring myself to decorate my room like a bordello, hence, the ivory and mauve decor.

After taking out the hot rollers and brushing my hair, I headed downstairs for my bagel with cream cheese and cranberry juice breakfast. Then I looked at my watch. Nope, no time for breakfast. I knew I'd have a battle with Mom over it, so I walked into the kitchen and said, "Mom, it's too late for me to eat breakfast. If we don't leave right now, we'll both be late!"

Mom turned around and smiled. She always seemed to smile while in the kitchen, her pride and joy. The room was bright and cheery, painted yellow and white with yellow eyelet

curtains and white table and chairs. Mom had even dragged Sunny, her little canary, into the kitchen so he could watch.

"Now, you know how I feel about breakfast. It is the most important meal of the day," Mom admonished.

"C'mon, Mom," I moaned as I pulled my jean jacket on. "We need to leave."

"We aren't going anywhere until you eat this," said Mom as she put two eggs, a piece of toast, and three sausage links on the table. She'd already put the cranberry juice at my place.

I sighed heavily and sat down. When I had forced down one egg, the toast, and the juice I stood up and practically shouted, "Let's go!"

"O.K., but you don't need to raise your voice to me." Mom got up and put on her coat.

On the way to school Mom told me about my eldest brother Steve's recent letter. "And Steve broke up with Carol last week." Mom waited for my response to that bit

of information. When she didn't get one, she went on, "Steve said that Drew should be sending you a letter soon." Both my older brothers Drew and Steve went to the University of Colorado. Drew was my idol and one of my best friends. I treasured every letter I received from him.

After a few more attempts at conversation, Mom stopped trying. Soon we arrived at my high school. I opened the door and got out. Mom said, "Bye, honey. I'll see you at 3:40! Have a nice day."

I muttered a terse "Bye" and slammed the door. Watching Mom drive off, I regretted my obnoxious behavior. Then, I just shrugged and thought that I would apologize later. Little did I know how much later.

The day wore on normally enough. I really enjoyed most of the classes my junior year. Chemistry was good--I found out that I had gotten a 100% on the last test. Algebra was the same sorry story it always was...being completely lost for fifty minutes. Next came psychology. I really enjoyed that class. However, about halfway through, I received a message to go to the office immediately. I showed it to Michelle, my best friend, who sat next to me. She didn't understand any better than I did why I would get called to the office since

I only got in trouble for talking, a minor offense. I arrived at the office and instantly knew something was very wrong when I saw Drew and Steve. Both had horrified looks on their faces.

"What's going on? What's happened?" I squeaked

"Oh, Beth..." Drew began as he took me into his arms.

"What?!" I shrieked.

"Beth, on Mom's way to work, she ran a stop sign and was hit by a truck. She was killed instantly."

I just looked at him.

"Beth, do you understand what I'm saying? Mom is dead!"

Realization finally sank in and I cried, "No! No! Oh...no..." With that, I went into shock.

Hours later I found myself on the sofa in our living room. I couldn't figure out why Dad, Steve, and Drew were all looking at me. Then, I saw Grandma LaRosa, Mom's mother. Suddenly, it hit me--Mom was dead! I began crying and Grandma rushed over to me. "Oh, Beth. You poor thing! Oh, why, God? Why didn't you take me instead?" Grandma wailed as she hugged me.

--No, I thought, --God should have taken me.

Those next three days were horrible. The showing at the funeral home lasted for two days. I never realized so many people knew my mother. People kept coming up to me and telling me how sorry they were, or they would ask if they could do anything to help. I wanted to say that I didn't mean to make Mom late that morning, that I didn't mean to kill her. But I kept silent.

The funeral was short. My Dad wanted me to get up and read the poem "Do Not Stand at My Grave and Weep," so I did. I amazed myself by not crying at all. Actually, I only cried when I saw Drew crying. I think my guilt overrode my sadness at the time. And I guess I figured that if I just shut everything out, nothing could ever hurt me again. I didn't know then, but I suffered much worse later by not grieving openly.

Since the funeral was on Thursday, I waited until the following Monday to return to school. Michelle came up to me at my locker and gave me a big hug. She had come to the funeral home and funeral, but I barely talked to her. I barely talked to anyone.

"I'm so glad you're back! How are

you?" Michelle inquired.

"Fine. I gotta go. I'm going to be late," I muttered as I hurried off. I glanced back, and Michelle had a hurt look on her face--well, better to hurt her now than kill her later, I thought.

My teachers told me to just take my time in making up things I had missed. I readily agreed. As the weeks went by, however, they began to approach me in a less than gentle manner and warned me that my grades were falling. Most were so surprised at first, I guess, because I had always been in the top ten in my class. Finally, they just gave up on me and wrote down zeros for assignments missed. I always came to school and took the tests, and these scores saved me from totally flunking that semester. I usually never needed to study much for tests to get A's. I was just lucky that way.

Besides blowing off my school work, I also ignored my family and friends. Drew and Steve went back to college. I went back to school but they both called a lot, and Drew came home every weekend. I knew it was for me that Drew made the effort, but I treated him badly. The only two living

things I paid any great amount of attention to were Blackbird and Sunny. Of all my friends, only Michelle stood beside me, though I never let her get close.

Then the Christmas holidays were upon us. Deck the halls, silent nights, and Santa Claus. It seemed as if every time I saw a twinkling light or heard a Christmas song, I wanted to throw up. I used to love the season; Mom would turn our house into a "Christmas town," complete with the tree and trimmings, candles all around, presents (and the cat) under the tree, and happiness everywhere.

That year, however, the Christmas tree seemed cheap and gaudy. No other decorations adorned our once cheerful home.

At dinner that night, everyone tried to pretend things were normal. Grandma cooked spaghetti, our traditional Christmas Eve dinner. I knew she was trying to make us and herself feel better, but I wished Grandma had made anything else than spaghetti.

"Great meal, Mom," Dad exclaimed. "Actually it tastes just like..." As Dad's sentence drifted off, all eyes looked at me. Any mention of Mom was not good in my presence. My whole family thought I was like a time bomb--ticking, ticking--just waiting to explode. They were right.

"Just like Mom's. Is that what you were going to say?" My voice rose an octave with each word.

Drew looked at me uneasily. "Take it easy, Beth. Dad didn't mean anything."

Of the rest of my family, I knew my new attitude hit Drew hardest. Yet I couldn't seem to stop myself from taking my anger out on the one person who could've helped me most. "'Take it easy, Beth.'" I mimicked. "You all act like nothing is wrong. First, Grandma makes Mom's spaghetti. Then, we all play 'happy family.' Well, I have news for you: we are not a happy family. In fact without Mom, we aren't even a family!" With that, I stomped to my room.

After I'd entered the only place I could be alone and shut the door, I was sorry for what I'd said. I knew I was making their lives miserable. Suddenly, I knew what I had to do. Maybe I had known all along.

Just then, Steve barged into my room. "Bethany Ariel Grayson, you are so incredibly insensitive and selfish. You can't go on acting like this. Get on with your life. Mom is dead, but your alive."

"Am I?" I whispered, so soft that

Steve couldn't hear.

"Oh, what's the use? Talking to you is like talking to a brick wall." He then fumed out of the room.

Two hours later my family left for Midnight Mass without me. I had made it clear that I wasn't going. I needed to end this pain, end this grief. And the only way I knew was to end my life.

I first went to Dad's medicine cabinet and downed practically a whole bottle of sleeping pills. I had taken a sleeping pill once before, and it made me dizzy. I knew this time I wouldn't be dizzy...I'd be dead.

While I was waiting to die, I wrote a note to Drew. I wrote:

Dear Drew,

I'm only doing this because I can't cope with life. If it hadn't been for me, Mom never would have died. You didn't know that, did you? I made Mom late for work, and that's why she ran the stop sign. I can't stand the guilt any longer. I do love you and everyone else, but I can't go on living when I don't love myself.

I drowsily made my way to Drew's room, dropped the note on his bed, and then went back to my room and fell asleep.

The first thing I remember after going to sleep was seeing myself floating above my inert form on the bed. I began to rise and to go through the ceiling, attic, and finally through the roof. I knew I should be cold since it was snowing, but the only feeling I had was a weightless sensation. I continued to drift upward until I was far above the clouds and even the stars. Finally, I reached a massive stone gate with marble doors. I was wondering if I could budge the doors even an inch when they noiselessly opened. I floated through the doorway and found myself in a seemingly endless hall. I began to see pictures on the walls as I floated, scenes from my life, from my birth to that Christmas Eve.

At the end of the hall came the end of the images. Two more doors loomed in front of me. They too, noiselessly opened. As I drifted through this doorway, I heard someone calling my name, "Beth, Beth!" in a beautiful, almost lyrical, voice.

I could not believe my eyes and ears! The voice belonged to my mother! "Mom, is that really you?! I asked incredulously.

"Yes, my darling. I've missed you so!" Mom took me into her arms, arms I could feel much to my surprise, and hugged me fiercely to her. Then, she held me at arm's length. "Beth, much as I want to be with you, I must send you back. You're too young and your life is just waiting to be lived!"

"Oh, no! I can't go back! I deserve to die. I killed you and made everyone's life so miserable. It's all my fault! How can you ever forgive me?" I sobbed.

"Beth, oh, Beth! There is nothing to forgive. It's true you did get up late, but you do that almost every day. I made you eat breakfast. And more importantly, I ran the stop sign. I made that choice, no one else. The only person you are responsible for is you. I was careless, not you." She paused to let her words sink in and then went on, "Beth, I love you and because I love you, I'm begging you to please choose life. It's the most precious gift God has given you."

"And the most precious gift you've given

me, Mom. Twice now, you've given me life," I whispered.

"Remember, Beth, I'll always be with you, in your heart and thoughts. After all, you are part of me--the best part."

"I love you, Mom!" I said as I began to drift away. "Goodbye!"

"No, my heart," I heard Mom answer. "No good-byes. Only until we meet again."

"She's coming back to us!" Those were the first words I heard on Christmas morning. Around me stood the people I loved most--Dad, Grandma, Drew, Steve, and Michelle. I also knew that Mom was there silently cheering me for choosing to live.

Nine years have passed since the death of my mother. So many things have happened. I quickly recovered from my suicide attempt with the help of a psychologist, my family, my loyal friend Michelle, and God. I managed to pull my grades up and graduated sixth in my class.

I want on to college to major in psychology, specializing in child and teenage depression. While in graduate school, I met Kevin Alexander, the man I later married. I also began working in the adolescent stress center at St. Anthony, the same hospital in which I recovered.

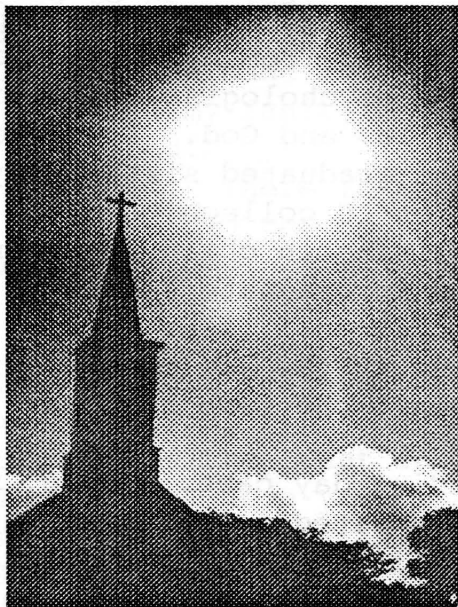
My wedding day came. Kevin, my nervous bridegroom, awaited me at the altar. The fresh April breeze filtered in through the stained glass windows of the church. Soon, the wedding

march began and the proud father escorted me, the equally proud daughter, to my place with Kevin.

"Who gives this bride away?" inquired Father Jim.

"I do, answered my dad. And to me, he whispered, "We both do."

While the readings of the wedding were being read, I glanced over to where Mom would have been sitting. An then I realized that Mom was there and always would be with me in my heart, just as she said so long ago. My next thoughts went back to that Christmas Eve, and I knew that what happened was truly a miracle...the miracle of life.



ADVERSARIAL

In an opposition of some kind.
That's where poetry can happen.
Between slime and sublimity,
between a howl and a hosanna.

A poem may be two armies met
upon a bridge. Competing
for another breath, one side
is marked for death.

Or two dancers waltzing round
a ballroom floor.
His mightier muscles and
her finer feet cooperate.

I'm trying, Reader, to survive
your liveliest artillery.
You try remembering one leads
and one must follow.

Joan Peternel



VENDING MACHINES KNOW ALL...

Seymour Pane

When I was 15 and just entering my sophomore year of high school, or, to put it in the vocabulary of an educator, just past Julius Caesar, but not quite advanced to Hamlet, the most interesting experience of my life, to this point anyway, occurred.

Having the voice cracks and preliminary acne of puberty well out of the way, the wonderful world of lust began its descent into my, otherwise sinless, world. (Please, allow me to insert now that I use the "sinless" in the most liberal sense.) I knew this because the simplest of tasks became impossible to execute without it being interrupted with the idea that the girl who sat next to me in Algebra might have meant something more than just polite socializing when she smiled at me the day before. To casually flip through the Sears Catalog without it eventually falling open to the lingerie section was soon a difficult exercise in self control. In fact, I was even prone to find that such comic strip greats as Blondie,

Sally Forth and any female character in Doonesbury did not go without their individual attributes; however, I could not find many qualities in Nancy that would interest an adolescent male. Alas, all of these stunning beauties, and there are a great many more I could mention, are not the reason for this story. I tell of them, not to allow you a view into the hormone ridden mind of a 15 year old; rather, I share their existence with you simply because they will be mentioned throughout the following paragraphs; although, they will be so cleverly disguised that not even the most perceptive of readers could root them out.

With the summer's end coming at full speed, I was filled with the usual symptoms of school withdrawal. I was almost excited to return to the mysterious realm of the classroom; however, I did not share this fact with even the closest of friends, who probably felt the same way. There was another feeling, though I have experienced it many times since then, and I puzzled over why I felt that way.

The preceding summer months had

had a similar agenda to all of the summers before: I had my usual lawnmowing job. I had gone on my usual vacation with the family, that year (it was 1986) we had gone to Michigan. I had spent hours of mind melting time in front of the television. It seemed that there should be no reason for that empty feeling to arise.

After days of reflection it seemed that there was going to be no way of relieving this feeling, I had compromised myself to the fact that I was just going to have to live with it. Then something happened the next day.

While I was busy taking my overflowing trashcan from my room to the dumpster outside of our apartment building, I happened upon a notebook lying just outside the entrance-way to our building. It seemed to be, aside from a large coffee stain on the cover, in very good shape. I took it back inside with me, and after replacing my trashcan, began to thumb through it. It was filled with numbers and incomprehensible facts and figures. I tried to make out what it was the numbers and variables and such represented with little luck. I was

beginning to think that this was not such a great find when I turned to the next page and found that it was completely uncontaminated by numbers. Instead I saw that it contained an excerpt from a poem. It read as follows:

Think about love,
but do not dwell.
Vending machines know all,
when it comes to being used.

And below the poem was written: Susan...265-8408.

The latter was scribbled, almost illegibly, in pencil. I stared at the page for at least twenty minutes. I tried to concentrate on the poem, but my eyes inevitably returned to the name and phone number.

"What if this notebook is important?" I thought. I decided it must be, mainly because I was anxious to call the phone number.

I went into the living room and dialed the number. As I waited for an answer I practiced deepening my voice, so I could sound more mature. I thought I was doing a very authentic job of it when I realized it was on about the seventh ring, and there was still no answer. I was reluctantly about to hang up when I heard someone pick up on the other end.

"Hello," an out-of-breath voice said. It sounded more like a proclamation than a greeting.

"Uh....yes," I babbled, my mature voice

all but forgotten. "Is this Susan?"

"Yes it is." She sounded like someone who had either just rushed through the door with an armload of groceries, or fought off a recent attack of wild dogs single-handedly. I favored the latter.

"Hello, my name is Terry Northern. I know that you have no idea who I am, but I found a notebook outside my apartment building, and your name and this phone number were in it, and I was wondering if it maybe belonged to you, or a friend of yours, maybe?"

"A what? You found a what?" Her tone was bordering on belligerent.

"A notebook. I found a notebook...uh, with your name and number in it."

"A notebook?"

"Yes, outside of my apartment building."

"What's your name, again?"

Her belligerent tone was fading into one of idle curiosity. I was becoming more relaxed, and realized that I had forgotten to deepen my voice. Deciding that it was now a lost cause to feign maturity, I attempted to be myself.

"Terry Northern."

"Oh, " she said. "What's inside of it?"

"Well, mostly a lot of numbers and fig-

ures and stuff, but on the page that I found your name and stuff on, there's a poem."

"A poem? What's it say?"

I recited the poem to her, and was amused to find that I did not even have to look at the page to do so. I had apparently memorized it. When I had finished reciting it there were a few moments of silence on the other end. I finally broke it by asking if she was still there.

"Yeah, yeah. I am. I was just trying to think of who that could belong to. I'm sure it's not mine."

"Oh...well, I don't know. I mean, I just found it lying outside, like I say. Do ya' want me to bring it to ya'?"

"I don't know what I'd do with it."

"Well, I mean, I thought it might be important or something. I don't know."

"Well, I just don't know what I'd do with it."

"Maybe, if you saw it, or something you might recognize whose it is."

I said this last part with a little too much enthusiasm, but you see, dear reader, I was by now in love with the faceless Susan. I wanted, with all of my heart, to meet her.

"I don't know....I really don't care too much. Tell you what kid, why doncha' just go ahead and throw it away. I don't know whose

it is, and I'm...uh...usually out. You know with my work and all. I was on my way out the door when you called as a matter of fact. So, you may as well just go on and throw it out, or whatever, I don't really care."

"Well...It might be important. I mean, I don't know what all these numbers mean."

"Then I can guarantee that I don't know what they mean. Look, I really don't care what you do with it."

"Well, if maybe you just tell me your address," I pleaded, "I could come by and leave it off."

"No, I don't think that that would be such a good idea. Why don't you just throw it out or something, I really don't care. I gotta go anyway. Sorry. 'Bye."

"Wait..." I called out to an audible click as she replaced her receiver.

I recradled my receiver, and I returned my gaze to the notebook. I reread the poem and the name of the woman I loved, and then I closed the cover. I was taking it to my room to put it into safe keeping when I took a detour. I went outside and threw it into the dumpster. I ran back into the house crying. I went to my room and stayed there the remainder of the day, and evening; I even missed supper. Thus was the end of, what will always be, the most fulfilling summer of my life.

Bid adieu to mere reality
Realms of delusion fill your soul
Fear occupies the darkened crevice
Pain's arrived and taken its toll
Fairy tales came back to haunt you
Told in a dark and grisly mode
Prince Charming sent a poison apple
Now you are the ugly toad.

Michelle Gobin

Untitled by Kurt
Clester

The search for food and adventure,
Being what it was,
Drove the ring-tailed animal,
To the edge of the woods.

From this cool and shady spot,
And across a narrow gravel trail,
Was a place never before seen,
And much more appealing than here.

From this place considered as home,
And across that gravel trail,
Without a second thought,
Began the journey from here to there.

Eyes and nose in downward slant,
With nothing to be feared,
No mortal enemy is in sight,
No sound is heard except the growl in his belly.

Suddenly from where the bandit does not know,
Comes a metal monster with flames as eyes,
Such a creature had never he seen,
Floating like a phantom on the ground.

Closer and closer.
Nearer and nearer.

With the screech of a thousand eagles,
And the dust of a storm,
Its hot breath was felt,
 Before it came to a halt.

Staring for a moment,
 But no harm had occurred,
Time is being wasted,
To that woods he must go.

Kurt Cleeter

In the Style of

J.R.R. TOLKIEN

In Honor and Memory of the 100th Anniversary
of his Birth (1892-1973)

A MOMENT OF AWAKENING

John P. Zielinski

The fog rolled over the morning like
the stench of a hundred nameless corpses.

What went wrong...?

Just three days ago the fellowship
of the sword was a confident band,
although admittedly a bizarre cacophony
of heroes, brigands, and common folk.

We had set out, I Elaura, and my free
spirited, yet determined group of adven-
turers a fortnight ago. A band of three
races traveling the countryside in these
dark times must have seemed odd enough to
those we encountered, but with a woman in
command bearing the standard of the kings
of old, my companions and I must have
appeared as strange as a beardless wizard
without a walking staff.

The wars, the mistrust, the destruction, what had become of the peace and prosperity of the kingdom of old...?

Our quest was of the utmost importance. Either we succeed and return the sword to its rightful keeper or the whole of Eldamar will be destroyed.

Only I and a few scholars of the ancient lore truly understood the implications of the prophecy:

When Harmonia in the house of Cronus abides; peace and prosperity will be kept as a prize!

Of course, the fellowship was a last resort. When the infliction began to plague every aspect of Eldamarian society, each race chose to deal with the menace independently, rather than implore the help of another ilk. The Dwarves shut themselves in the mines of their mountain dwellings. The Elves chose to fight openly, and the humans, as our race is apt to do, chose both paths of courage, as well as folly. However, none of the three had anything but minor success, and a last desperate gamble for redemption, faith was placed in an ancient prophecy that few believed in. A fellowship was formed united in determination and purpose in nothing else.

My grandsire of old Cronus, during the first age of the sun, destroyed Malice, the Lord of hats and fear, an evil demon of the Seventh Circle, generation upon generations ago. This accomplished through an alliance of Good. The races of human, elf, and dwarf had once lived in peace and harmony and together they forged and placed their combined powers into a sword, which they named Harmonia in the Westron tongue. Through the power of this sword, Cronus was able to overcome the evil of Malice, slay his corporal self, and banish his spirit into the Void.

Peace and prosperity came to Eldamar for an uncounted passing of the seasons. Then the spirit of the Lord of hat returned and by his tricks of malevolence caused the races to be prideful and bigotry was introduced to Eldamar. In the mayhem the sword was stolen. A pestilence entered the land. Crops decayed, animals died, and lamentation was heard throughout the three kingdoms as the curse of the stillborn inflicted pain and sorrow on man, elf, and dwarf alike.

These proud races sent the bravest, or maybe the most foolhardy, I don't know anymore, of their people to comprise an alliance of the races of Eldamar; a

fellowship to retrieve the sword Harmonia.

What has become of us now...?

As I stare at the battlefield this very morn, only carnage and sorrow lay before me. We were only a breath and a whisper from triumph. With victory in our grasp, a shadow came across the land and the sun turned to blood as it faded into night. From over the ridge, an army like flies eager to lick at a puss-filled sore swarmed upon us. Trolls, orcs, and goblins, riding creatures I had only seen in my darkest nightmares were engaging us in battle faster than the winged horses of the Fireside Vale.

We were only six score, but my companions fought like 500 knights of the Royal Guard. Only the fog and the light which came with morning saved those of us who remained.

The hordes of evil lay dead on the plain. Their blood spilled and mixed with our companions who had fought and died bravely, and who will surely be remembered in song for many moons.

I Elaura of the house of Cronus, a woman mightier in lead and lore than in battle; Balamir the dwarf, slow in wit but swift with axe; and Evening Star the elf,

the Elven king's squire are all of the fellowship that survived the battle. It is now up to the three of us, on individual for each race of Eldamar, to succeed in stealth and wit where a host had failed in might.

here we stand at a moment of destiny for the entire world, finally realizing that only by working together through cooperation; by recognizing the powers and benefits that each race has to contribute; only by making whole again what the evil one divided in perception into three parts, do we strand a chance against the forces of discord.

Here we stand, in harmony, at a moment of awakening!

PAINT

Diana Hultquist

At eighteen, Elizabeth was pretty and popular and bored with the small town where she lived. Parkersville seemed to her to be plain and brownly ugly with the buildings looking too much alike. This place where everyone knew everyone else had always been her home. When she started kindergarten, she already knew her classmates, and the teacher had gone to kindergarten with her mother. In the fifth grade, when she won the spelling bee, practically the entire town went with her to the next stage of the contest in neighboring Huntsville. In the tenth grade, geometry was beyond her comprehension. It was during this time that she was pulled over by the sheriff while driving downtown. The sheriff was only George, whom she had known since her birth, but it was still embarrassing to have the flashing lights of his car behind her while he mo-seyed up to her window. "So, young lady, how's geometry going by now? If it's not getting any clearer to you, we'll have to find you a good tutor."

Living in this town was like living with a huge, loving, but smothering family. Maybe that was all right. Maybe they were

like the were and they couldn't change. But the way the town looked--she could change that. Parkersville itself needed some brightness and color to its buildings and streets. If she were going to stay here, either she or it would have to change. Elizabeth liked herself the way she was, so the drabness of the town had to change.

At 2 a.m. on June 2nd, she filled her car with buckets of brilliant paints. She had green , yellow, blue, and red. She brought paint rollers with pans and brushes of different sizes and even a little stepladder. Using the green first, with a roller she encircled the outside walls of the fire station with two feet of flowing green grass. Next came the daisies. Some stems were three feet high and some were taller than seven. At the top of each stem were five or six large yellow petals. With an extension pole and a short roller, she continued with light blue clouds. The fire house had never looked so good, with those bright yellow giant daisies, spaced irregularly around the walls. A few butterflies, birds, and some more clouds and she was through.

As she loaded her equipment and thought of how to improve the library, her two gallon can of yellow toppled out of the car. The clang and clatter of the can rent the air. As it rolled along the walk toward the door to the fire station, its lid popped off and yellow paint splattered in all directions. It gave the entrance a

unique cheeriness. The fire dog's barks added to the uproar. He dutifully alerted the sleeping firemen, who with the speed firemen are known for, ran through the yellow paint chasing her. "Elizabeth! It's Elizabeth! What the hell is she doing? What the hell has she done?"

They knew it was her. She had to leave now. She left her friends and family and everything she owned, except her car and her paint. She decided to keep going and call her parents when she arrived wherever it was that she stopped.

All Elizabeth could think about was that she had almost been caught. What would have happened if she had been? What worse than being alone in a big, unfamiliar city?

She hadn't slept yet, so she pulled into a motel that looked affordable. "That'll be \$40 for the night. Be out by 11." The man had gray, oily hair, and his stomach, which was covered with a blue t-shirt, hung out over his belt.

He didn't even look at her as he reached out to take the money. Elizabeth was sure Harry and Martha charged half that for a night at their unflashy

white and red cottages at the edge of Parkersville.

Inside the motel room was a bed with a grayish-green spread, gray carpet and brown peeling walls. Worse than Parkersville. She fell asleep on top of the green bed spread. It might be cleaner than between the sheets. Eleven o'clock came with a sharp knock on the door. "I'm just about to leave. I need to grab my things." She had nothing to grab, but splashed cold water on her face, swished out her sleepy mouth and wished she had awakened early enough for a real shower.

Out in the car, she thought about where she would go. Small town--big city, drab buildings--bright lights, over-protective people--people who didn't care. She pulled into St. Paul a little after noon.

She drove through the downtown area, looking for a place to have lunch before finding somewhere to spend the night. She turned right toward a flashing sign that said "Eat here." Only after she had turned, did she notice it was a one-way street going the other direction. The only thing she could think to do was to pull up on the sidewalk. "You idiot, lady!" "Get your stupid car out of

here!" The comments from those unfriendly pedestrians would have been enough, but a city policeman pulled up alongside her. He checked her driver's license. "I don't know how you people drive in Parkersville, ma'am, but in St. Paul we don't drive on our sidewalks." He gave her a ticket and pointed her to a parking garage where she parked the car.

She needed to stop, since she came with only the clothes she had been wearing last night and her several buckets of paint, but where were the stores? "On the edge of town-- in every direction, on each edge of town. Our really good stores are in the malls." She got directions from the young mother, to the mall that was closest. On her way back to where she had parked her car, she felt a sudden, quick and slightly painful jerk on her arm. A boy who looked about fourteen had the strap of her shoulder bag and was running in the opposite direction from what she had been walking. Elizabeth stumbled in awkward running steps backwards. She had never learned any self-defense tactics, but the scream that came from her mouth was just as effective. Her offender let go so quickly that Elizabeth stumbled, fell forward face down on the street with the contents of the purse

scattered everywhere. Two others walked on by with only a sideways glance. Elizabeth got up, got herself and her purse together and determined to get back to her car and to go to the mall.

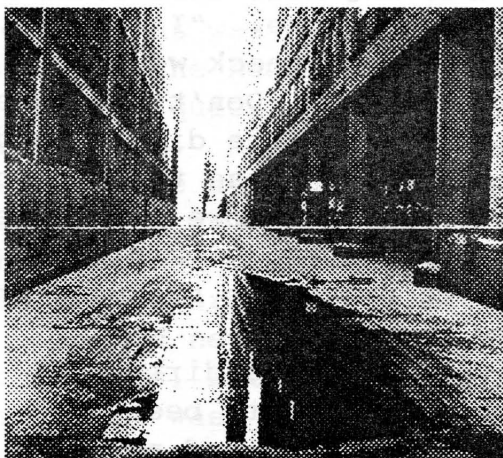
The mall was more familiar than the city streets, and she hoped it was also a little safer. She had been here a few times with her family, and once with some friends. It was fun being alone in this expansive place, where no one knew who she was, or cared. The feeling of enjoyment ended when it was time to pay for the sweaters she had gathered in an elegant department store. "I'm sorry, I can't accept your check without more identification. Don't you have a credit card?" No, she didn't, and she wasn't charging these things, she was paying by check. More I.D. She couldn't satisfy them. She didn't have enough to prove who she was, and nobody knew her.

"I have slept on a dirty bed, gotten a traffic ticket, been assaulted by a teenager, and now you won't take my money. This is enough. I'm going home."

"I'm sorry, ma'am. It's just

our store policy."

On her way back to Parkersville, she began to wonder why she really had left, and she began to make plans for her next escape to the big city. Now she understood some of the differences between the plain, friendly town and the flashy big city. She felt an appreciation for the one and a respect for the other. She would be prepared next time with a packed suitcase, at least one credit card, and maybe a friend for moral support and for someone who knew who she was.



MAN IN THE MIRROR

The worn haggard man
Stooped low
Dirty cardboard at his feet;
One pocket of his jeans
Ripped off,
A darker patch revealed--
Once new...

Cars stopped near him
Light red;
Motors running, radios playing.
He stands
The motors die, the radios stop,
His eyes look straight ahead
Far away...

Away from laughing windshields,
From pity's rear-view mirror
Someplace
Where men will work for justice
For peace and common decency.
Not here...
Where men
"Will work for food."

Karen Murphy

THE LETTER

Michelle Fletcher

CHARACTERS: *Stacey* - 18 year old college bound student, has just received college acceptance off of waiting list.

Ron - *Stacey's* athletic boyfriend, he is planning on going to the Community College.

Jen - *Stacey's* energetic best friend. Has also been wait listed, but hasn't been accepted yet. Doesn't want to go to CC, but is.

SETTING: A small bedroom. Several articles, including a stereo, cluttered desk and bulletin board, cosmetic table, yearbook and telephone denotes that a female teenager inhabits the room. A footlocker with the tags still on it sits at the foot of the bed.

The scene opens with *Stacey* sitting on her bed, holding pillow, and *Ron* standing by desk reading letter.

Ron: So you got in.

Stacey: Yes! I was really surprised. People on the waiting list usually don't. I think it was the second batch of articles that convinced them I was worth taking. Guess I got lucky.

Ron: So you're going.

Stacey: I suppose so. (*Stacey, uncomfortable, stands and walks away from Ron, Jen bursts in, bright and bubbly*)

Jen: STACEY! (*she lunges toward Stacey and gives her a bear hug*) I came over as quick I could! I am so happy for you! State is such a great place! I am soo jealous!

Ron: She hasn't decided for sure that she's going yet.

Jen: WHAT! Last night you said that Christian Slater himself could move in next door and you'd still go away to school if you got that letter.

Stacey: I know, but I... (*Ron interrupts*) (*Stacey starts sorting and trashing papers on desk*)

Ron: I don't understand why you think State is so great Jen.

Jen: Why? WHY? You've lived in this town for 18 years and you don't see why State is so great?

Ron: There's nothing wrong with this place.

Jen: Ron, I thought you had a brain! (*Stacey, startled by Jen's comment, turns to look at them*) There are more people at State than there are in Jones County! With an opportunity like State has, why would she want to stay?

Stacey: Well I do like(*Ron interrupts*)

Ron: Because all of her friends are here.

Jen: There are 50,000 students at State! I'm sure she's bound to get along with one of them!

Ron: Yeah, but she doesn't know any-one there now.

Jen: She didn't know any of us when she got here.

Stacey: Only you(*Ron interrupts*)

Ron: She just met us three years ago. Why should she start over again?

Jen: (*matter of factly*): Death is dwelling on the past or staying in one place too long.

Stacey: I think we should.....(*Jen interrupts*)

Jen: Besides, there's more for her at State.

Ron: Like what?

Jen: For starters, there are 25,000 eligible guys. There are dance clubs. There are theaters that show more than Terminator 2. Plus, it's the best journalism school in the country. With her talent, that's the only place that will be a challenge for her.

Ron: Why are you in such a rush to

get rid of her?

Stacey: Ron!

Ron: Is it because you're not going this year?

(Jen bites lip and looks up)

Stacey: That's not fair!

Ron: But it's true. Does Com Col have a club for State Wanna Be's? Makes you wish that you'd studied more and played less, doesn't it?

Stacey: That was low.

Jen: Don't we all wish we had studied a little more and played a little less? Didn't State need another wrestler? Maybe CC has a bowling club you can join to keep in shape.

Ron: There were thirty of us to fill three spots. Besides, if I stay here, I can work for my dad and learn the business. Plus, I still help out at Footlights.

Jen: *(sarcastically enthusiastic):* Great Ron! So "Mitchell Shoe Emporium" will go on. Plus, as an added bonus, you can still hang out at the community theatre you've been with since you were seven. Gosh, you're big on advancement.

Ron: Is it such a bad thing to WANT to stay here?

Jen: It is when it's a cop-out.

Ron: Meaning....

Jen: Meaning that if you'd put forth more effort in things, you could have gotten in on academics or acting. Meaning that you could have aspirations like I do to transfer in a few semesters. Meaning you should move forward!

Ron: I don't want to move anywhere anymore. And I don't think Stacey should either, not by herself at least. State's not a safe place for a small town girl.

Stacey: Would the two of you please...*(Jen interrupts)*

Jen: Yeah, you're right. It's not safe for Stacey on a Friday night when you're not around. The place is crawling with good-looking INTELLIGENT and TALENTED guys ready to pounce on girls like Stace.

Ron: No. I just don't see why anyone would go to a place that has its own date-rape hotline and keys to the elevators.

Jen: You just don't see why your built-in date is leaving you. You know, the freshman mixer at the Union will have more people between 18 and 20 at it than you've ever seen in your life and half of them will be male.

Stacey: You guys had better.... *(Ron interrupts)*

Ron: *(to Stacey):* I don't understand why you just can't go to Com Col like we are. It's small, it's got good classes and we would see each other every day.

Jen: (*sarcastically*): Oh peachy!

Ron: (*ignores her*): There's no need for security guards to walk you around at night. Plus, you can still live here and have your mom do your laundry.

Jen: You're so homebound. You talked a little higher last year. What ever happened to applying to the University of Hawaii? I thought the girls in the grass skirts had you hooked!

Stacey: (*smiling*): That was the one where we could have rented the grass hut together, wasn't it?

Jen: Yep. Weren't you the one that suggested we all go to Miami U together?

Stacey: We could have lived on the ocean or something, right?

Jen: Now you want us all to give up like you have. There's an article for you Stacey - "Defeated Wrestler Wants Friends to Sacrifice Lives So That He Won't Eat Lunch Alone at Com Col".

Ron: (*calmly, ignoring their remarks*): My mom and dad have talked about this forever. We all decided that I should stay here. So I am. And the more I think about it, the more I see that there's no reason for you or Stacey to leave here.

(*phone rings, Stacey answers it, Jen and Ron ignore her*)

Jen: You just don't want her to go because she'll forget you. Six hours round trip is a long way to drive just to see a movie with you.

Ron: Our relationship is stable. If she decides to go, we'll manage to keep in touch.

Jen: Yeah, until the next Peter Jennings sweeps her off her feet....

Ron: She won't forget me. She might forget you though, since you won't be her roommate.

Stacey: Jen, it's George. Do want to go out tonight?

Jen: *(not answering to Stacey, but replying in an unbelievable tone to Ron):* Sure, whatever, Ron. Dream on! Any large jock with Greek letters tattooed on his chest could replace you. Besides, her roommate could never replace me. *(arrogantly)* I'm irreplaceable.

Stacey: Is a 7:30 movie ok?

Ron: *(not answering Stacey, but rebutting Jen):* Yeah, sure-*(being boldly dramatic)* JEN THE IRREPLACEABLE. Remember how Stace told you that you replaced Jill since they never talked after the move? Do you think Stace is actually going to have time to write when she gets new friends?

Jen: Remember how you replaced Darren?

Stacey: I dumped Darren because he was a

jerk, not because I moved. Now why don't we all go..... (*Ron interrupts*)

Ron: I just think it's dumb that she has to leave a perfectly good place to go be a number.

Jen: Cope.

Ron: Why are you so set on her going?

Jen: Because she'll be happier.

Ron: Stacey, tell your friend here that you're happy.

Stacey: Well, I..(*Ron interrupts*)

Ron: How can a person be happy at a place where along with your class schedule they hand out complimentary cans of mace? (*Stacey returns to desk and sorts*)

Jen: Ron, a girl can only drive by the DQ and yell "Hey Bob!" so many times before watching everybody look gets old. There are only so many salt shakers in town you can loosen. Only so many light bulbs you can swipe from restaurants. Only so many times you can cruise thru Burger King asking for water refills in a McDonald's cup. What else does this town offer?

Ron: Well, um....there's always the phone prank (*in radio announcer's voice*) "Hi I'm Biff from Baskin Robbins and if you can name 31 flavors in 31 seconds I'll give you 31 dollars and 31 cents. Now go!"

Jen: Yes, that's kept you amused for hours, hasn't it?

Stacey: Will the two of you please....(Ron interrupts)

Ron: Well if this town is so lame, why aren't gone?

Stacey: Ron!

Jen: If I could, I would. But I can't this year. So I'm sending my best friend.

Ron: Sending?

Jen: Supporting her in her endeavors, which is more than what you're doing.

Stacey: WILL YOU TWO PLEASE STOP IT! I've got two months left to listen to both of you - the movie starts in a half hour and we still have to pick up George.

Jen: Who?

Stacey: (*smiling*): Your date, George.

Jen: (*repulsed*) George of the computer club? George the tuba player? George bound for Tech on a Rocket Science scholarship? When did I make a date with him?

Stacey: He called somewhere between Mom doing my laundry and JEN THE IRREPLACEABLE.

Jen: (*sarcastically*) Thanks so much.

Ron: (*mockingly*): At least he's INTELLIGENT AND TALENTED.

Jen: Yeah, in collecting bottle caps and belly button lint.

Stacey: Imagine the guys I can set you up with when you come to visit!

Jen: (*sarcastically*): I can't wait.

Ron: So you're going.

Stacey: Yes. I am going to the movies, George included.

Ron: I mean going. You're really set State, aren't you?

Stacey: Yes. Can we talk about this later?

Jen: I don't think there's much to say. You're going and we're not.

Stacey: Look, it's getting late. I promise I won't forget EITHER of you. Now can we PLEASE go pick up George?

Ron: I don't feel much like a movie. (*hands Stacey the acceptance letter & leaves*)

Jen: If you think I'm going out with George, you're nuts. And don't get too hyped on playing matchmaker, OK? Oh and tell George I'm sorry to cancel, but that my big toenail chipped and I'm laid up for weeks or something, PLEASE? (*Stacey nods*) Thanks! (*stops at doorway*) I'll call you tomorrow.

Stacey: Yeah-I'll talk to you tomorrow. (*Jen leaves*) There's always tomorrow with you. Until September. (*Sits on bed, hugging pillow and holding letter*)

(pause)

phone, dials) George? Stacey. Jen and Ron both canceled, but if you're still up for the movie, I can pick you up in ten minutes. (pause) Great. What? (pause) Oh-thanks - I was really surprised when I got the letter. (pause) Well, don't spread it around, but I can't wait to go. All the people, the classes, everything....

(pause) Yeah, but we'll still be able to come home to visit everyone. (pause) Have you started shopping yet? (pause) Oh, you got your loft already? (pause) No, I haven't even started pricing anything yet.

(pause) Yeah, I know time sure does fly in the summer. (pause) Target has fridges on sale? My mom got a trunk today at K-Mart on her way home from work- she was so excited when I called her - (pause) I think they're \$15. (pause) No, I don't know if I'm bringing the TV or she is. (pause)

We'll have to compare lists of essentials! (pause) OK - I'll be over in a bit.

Stacey thumbtacks letter to bulletin board, grabs purse and keys and leaves, turning light switch off as she exits.

THE CHAMBER

I remember nights
Lonely
in the chamber of my heart,
Upstairs

The ceiling slants as if
an attic
holding memories;
my bed, my dreams

From just one window
I could live
enough of the world and feel
nature's growth

Summer branches turned transparent
vivid green
then colored with age most
brilliant red

At the height of winter, from this
second floor,
my world was whitened, yet window touched
by only chickadees

Then trees tapped glass to show
me their buds,
my wakening alarm, the proud

wren's reminder

At dusk starry skies carried gossip
of unseen cows
and squirrels glanced in curious
on their way home

Now my world's beyond pastures and
apple tree blossoms,
No gentle breeze lulls me
to sleep

My chamber seems much
emptier now
belonging and caring for none,
for which none care

The layers of dust, faint walls
count the years
in absence it's waited
to become someone's world

Noelle Gasco

NOVA

Kristine Abel

I remember how Robert had seemed so confident when he picked me up that night. I can still picture him in my mind, sitting back in his blue Nova smoking a cigarette. It took him a minute to notice me because I was hiding in the shadow of the house. Slowly, he reached over and unlocked the door for me.

"So what did you tell your mother? Did you tell her what I told you to?" he asked.

We drove on for a few minutes in silence. When we were out of the neighborhood and in unfamiliar territory, I finally asked him what his big surprise was all about. "Just wait, babe," he said, "You'll love it."

The wind blew hard against her shoulders, and the torrents of rain flogged her, forcing her to hide her face against the storm. She had been standing outside the door for a long while. She felt the baby kick inside her. After what seemed an eternity, Molly went inside.

The woman at the front desk asked her to fill out some papers. It reminded her of the papers her mother had to fill out at the welfare place. Marital status--single. age--20. Father's name--blank. She now under-

stood what caused the painful look on her mother's face. She finished the papers, sat down to wait, and remembered.

The motel he brought me to was about to fall apart. From the car I could see a man walking around the room, smoking a cigar and drinking something out of a bottle. I could hear a woman in the background yelling something vulgar. The neon sign was starting to give me a headache, flashing on and off, on and off.

Robert kept talking. "Shit, Molly, we always do the same thing when we go out. I pick you up, take you out, and then I gotta have you home in time so you don't turn into a damn pumpkin." He kept fidgeting with his cigarette pack, wanting me to say something. "For once, I'd like to be able to spend some time alone with you without being on a clock. We can just relax here, that's all." Then he got out of the car, slammed the door and walked toward the room.

When the woman returned, Molly gathered her bag and followed her down the long hallway. The dimly lit room she showed Molly to reminded her of one of those doll houses you'd see with just a bed and chair for furniture. The bed was covered by a small afghan, probably made

and donated by someone from her parish. The lady told Molly that she could go to the kitchen in a while and have the cook prepare her some dinner.

Robert opened the door and let me walk in first. The black-and-white television set stood in front of the bed, and it made me think of my fifth-grade teacher, Sister Clare--how she would stand in front of our class with her hands on her hips, waiting for one of us to misbehave.

Robert turned on the television. "I Never Promised You A Rose Garden" was on. He reached over and squeezed my hand, giving me a big, smug smile. He got up and went over to the table to get the ashtray.

The cook crossed the room and set the plate in front of Molly. She was a talker, asking all sorts of questions. "So how far along are you?" she asked. When Molly told her she was eight months, she dropped the spoon she was drying and turned to her in amazement. "For being eight months, honey, you shore are small. Here, eat some more."

She scooped the casserole onto her plate. "Eat it, girl. You don't want to starve that kid, now do you?" Molly choked down the last few bites and the cook lit up a cigarette as she went on cleaning and speaking about the old days.

"Want a smoke?" he offered. I nodded no and just sat there staring at the t.v. He peered out the curtain as he took a hit off his cigarette, then he put it out in the ashtray and sat back down next to me on the bed; close enough that I could smell the ashes on his skin. I kept looking at the t.v. but I could feel him staring at me. His eyes were penetrating my skin, probing my very essence. I didn't want to look back at him. I realized what this was really all about. I wanted to leave.

"You look beautiful tonight, babe. Do you know how tempting you are?"

He gripped me shoulder and pulled me close to his face. I felt like a mouse thrown into a snake's cage. I felt an empty fear, a fear that there was no escape, no way out.

He started to snicker. "Babe," he said, "just relax."

"Did you hear me?" the cook gently shook Molly's shoulder. Her hands were clenched and she hadn't been paying any attention to the old woman's ramblings.

"You shore need to relax, girlie. Here, sip some of this." She handed Molly a mug of something that smelled like coffee, yet tasted like pure sugar. The warmth of it spread throughout her

body, giving her a chance to slow her breathing into a steady pace. The drink slowly thawed her back into reality.

I exhaled slowly, lifting my face to the mirror. The cold water did nothing. My eyes--red, puffy and swollen--returned a pale, blank look. My body ached. I wanted to shower, to get his smell off of me. Outside the locked door, I heard him picking up his keys. He yelled out, "Are you coming. I'm leaving now." He paused, "Fine. Find your own ride back."

I was torn between wanting to get away from him and away from this place. If I stayed, I didn't know how I could get home. I didn't have any money with me. Yet to go with him--I couldn't even think about it.

I reached for the door handle, but stopped long enough to look around the room one more time. I was hoping for some answer to why I let myself in this mess, why I did the things I did. The room didn't tell me, so I rushed out toward the Nova.

OBSERVATION BY THE STUDY FIRE



I sit in the dark
of my Gothic, Tudor house
With only a thin, tapered candle
burning.

My friends are the aged books
in the dark bookcases,
The yellowed letters
that I hold upon my lap,
And the pile of photographs
containing youthful faces
Who beckon to me
with their eyes
--ever so dark and questioning.

Yet, their moment
is gone
Their eyes turned to ash,
and, I,
One of the living
am left to ponder
The unseen past
beside the ashes
of the Study Fire.

Nicola Rossi

